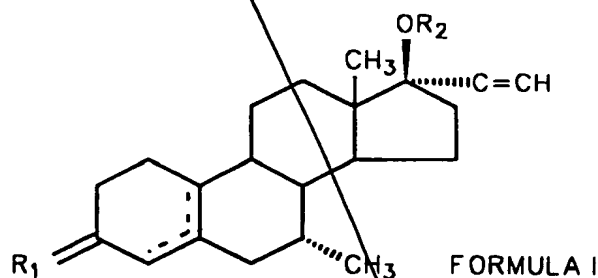


## Claims:

1. Use of a 7 $\alpha$ -methyl-17 $\alpha$ -ethynyl-estrane derivative having the general formula I



wherein

$R_1 = H(OR_3)$  or O;

$R_2 = H$  or  $(C_{1-18})Acyl$ ;

$R_3 = H$  or  $(C_{1-18})Acyl$ ;

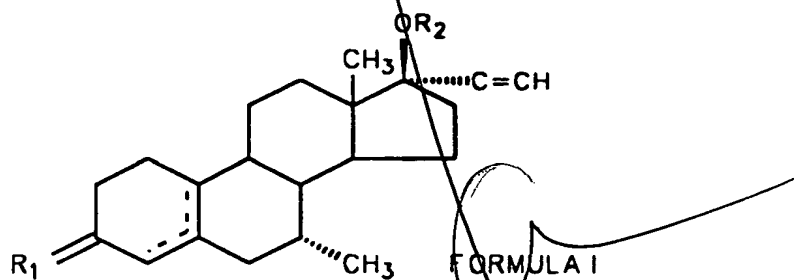
and the dotted line represents a double bond in the 4,5- or the 5,10-position, for the manufacture of a medicament for the prophylaxis or the treatment of atherosclerosis.

- The method*
2. Use according to claim 1, wherein  $R_1 = H, OH$  or O.

- 15 *The method*
3. Use according to claim 1 or 2, wherein  $R_2 = H$  and the dotted line represents a double bond in the 5,10-position.

- 20 *The method*
4. Use according to claim 1, wherein the a 7 $\alpha$ -methyl-17 $\alpha$ -ethynyl-estrane derivative is 7 $\alpha$ -methyl-17 $\alpha$ -ethynyl-17 $\beta$ -hydroxy-estra-5(10)-en-3-one.

5. A method of inhibiting the process of atherosclerosis comprising administering to a mammal an atheroprotective amount of a 7 $\alpha$ -methyl-17 $\alpha$ -ethynyl-estrane derivative having the general formula I



5 wherein

R<sub>1</sub> = H(OR<sub>3</sub>) or O;

R<sub>2</sub> = H or (C<sub>1-18</sub>)Acyl;

R<sub>3</sub> = H or (C<sub>1-18</sub>)Acyl;

and the dotted line represents a double bond in the 4,5- or the 5,10-position.

10

6. The method according to claim 5 wherein the mammal is human.